

# Health-Enhancing Physical Activity Policy Audit in four EU Member States

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## What is already known on this topic

### Relevance of policies promoting physical activity (PA)

- Public policy is increasingly recognized as an important „upstream“ component of PA promotion
- In order to develop future country-level policies and international action plans, a thorough understanding of current national activities and contexts is key

### Health-enhancing PA Policy Audit Tool (HEPA PAT)<sup>1</sup>

- Standardized instrument to assess national policy approaches to PA
- Developed by WHO with support from the European Commission

### PA policies in European countries

- Single studies of PA policies in European countries based on the HEPA PAT<sup>2, 3</sup>
- However, the knowledge about the current status, implementation and effectiveness of policies that can promote PA in different countries is still very limited



## What our studies add



### Systematic comparison of four EU member states<sup>4</sup>

- Detailed and up-to-date overview of PA policy-making in Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and Poland, covering all phases of the policy cycle from agenda-setting to policy evaluation

### Main similarities between countries

- Agenda-setting: Role of national health monitoring and PA prevalence data
- Decision-making: Dominating role of health and sport sector
- Policy implementation: Good coverage of major population groups
- Policy evaluation: Even though the need is recognized in all four countries, by far not all major policies have built-in evaluation mechanism

### Main differences between countries

- Policy-making structures: Centralisation (Ireland, Netherlands) vs. strong regional level (Germany, Poland)
- Policy formulation: Leadership by a single sector such as health (Germany) or sport (Poland) vs. shared leadership by several sectors (Ireland, Netherlands)

## Policy recommendations

1. Increase awareness for the importance of PA policies in sectors beyond sport and health (such as education, transport, urban planning, and tourism) and increase their contribution to existing policy-making efforts.
2. Create mechanisms to ensure that all future PA policies are evaluated with respect to their effectiveness.
3. Intensify PA policy monitoring for EU countries, e.g. by complementing the EU's existing triennial survey on the HEPA Monitoring Framework with more in-depth monitoring utilizing the HEPA PAT at fixed intervals.
4. Step up policy monitoring at the subnational and local level and identify effective, parsimonious means to collect and handle all relevant data, especially in federalist states.
5. Ensure political support at the national level and adequate, reliable resourcing to build a permanent monitoring mechanism.
6. Support further research on the potential effects of policy monitoring on national policy-making and on PA promotion action at the subnational and local level.

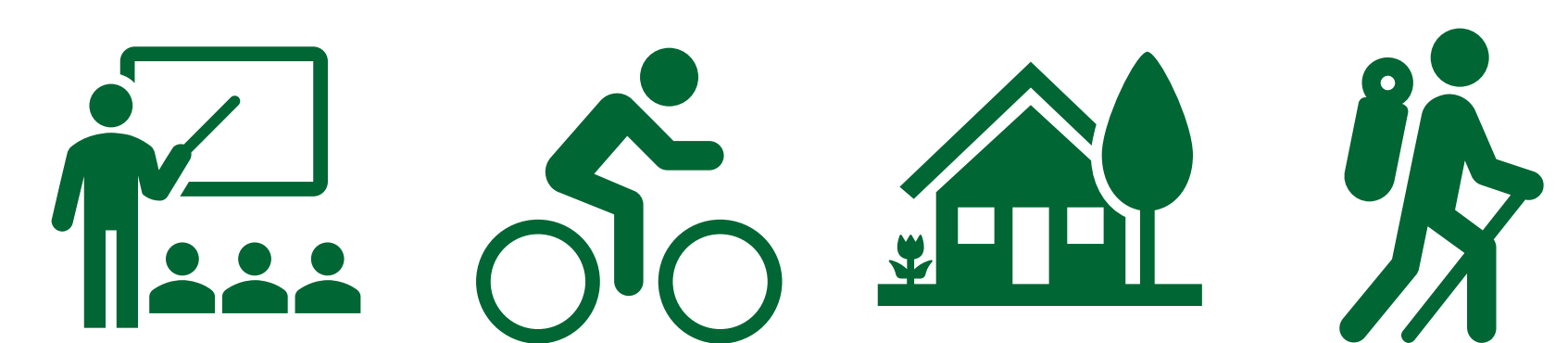


Figure 1. Gelius et al 2021

### Literature references

<sup>1</sup> Bull et al 2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2013-093200>; <sup>2</sup> WHO 2015. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/publications/2015/health-enhancing-physical-activity-hepa-policy-audit-tool-pat-version-2-2015>; <sup>3</sup> Van Hoya et al 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2019.01.008>; <sup>4</sup> Gelius et al 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00681-6>